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THE ROOTS AND DEVELOPMENT OF MESTIZO
CULTURE

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The paper presents a working hypothesis on the origins and development of Mestizo Culture in New Spain based on a brief literature survey. Its purpose is to bring to the attention of anthropologists interested in the problem of the mechanics of culture change the fact that in Mexico adequate documentation must exist on the crystallization of a new cultural form from two earlier cultures.

The hypothesis developed is that Mestizo culture has its origins in a group of persons who occupied an economic niche peculiar to and fostered by the contact situation in New Spain in the early 16th century. Historical accident and the nature of Spanish and aboriginal value systems acted upon this group to keep it a distinctive entity and endow it with the attributes of culture in a process which took about 200 years.